



FRESHWATER CAST · MONDAY CAST

Cooney Reservoir: Cool Dawns, Local Wind & Rainbow trout First Light

Red Lodge Creek · Cooney State Park · Friday Sep 28 – Sunday Sep 30, 2026 · bank / kayak / boat · times MT

Highs ~70° Mon → ~77° Tue → ~71° Wed (NWS BYZ)

Primary: rainbow trout · soft recreational pressure

E0 stations near this water · no prices

No named trail event pulled for Oct 2–4

Early October on Cooney Reservoir — cool dawn windows, quiet weather, and a Fri–Sun bite that rewards first light before weekend traffic builds.

• MIDWEEK OUTLOOK

NWS band pull (south / Tongue River representative) — applied to Cooney Reservoir keeps a **quiet early-October pattern** for this Friday **Cast** window (Fri–Sun) at Cooney Reservoir. **Friday** ~81°F / ~47°F, sunny, wind NNE 1 to 6 mph. **Saturday** ~72°F / ~41°F, mostly sunny, wind NNW 8 to 15 mph. **Sunday** ~78°F / ~45°F, sunny, wind E 3 mph. Storm chances stay **near zero**. Reader clocks below are **MT** (water-local).

For walleye: lean **first light through mid-morning** on windward points, creek arms, and ramp-adjacent structure before afternoon warmth or breeze rearranges the bite. Weekend recreational pressure usually runs heavier than midweek — **no named B.A.S.S. / FLW / ABA trail event pulled** for this water on Oct 2–4.

FRIDAY OCT 2

~81°F

Low ~47° · ~0% storms · NNE 1 to 6 mph
Sunny — fish the cool dawn window first

Sunrise **7:15 AM** · Sunset **6:38 PM** MT

Best bite: first light–mid-morning on points and creek mouths

SATURDAY OCT 3

~72°F

Low ~41° · ~0% storms · NNW 8 to 15 mph
Mostly Sunny; use any breeze for windward presentations

Sunrise **7:16 AM** · Sunset **6:36 PM** MT

Best bite: dawn shallow; mid-day slide deeper if the sun climbs hard

SUNDAY OCT 4

~78°F

Low ~45° · ~0% storms · E 3 mph

Sunny — another clean fall day; expect more weekend traffic

Sunrise **7:17 AM** · Sunset **6:34 PM** MT

Best bite: first light again before the Sunday crowd piles on

WINDOW NOTE

Fri–Sun only

Next Cast cycle covers Mon onward

Monday trend: watch the local NWS grid for cool-down or wind shift

No storm train flagged for this corridor at pull

Clarity unconfirmed; protected arms often fish clearer after calm nights

● DAM / LEVEL CHEAT SHEET

Cooney Dam forms Cooney Reservoir (FWP State Park) on Red Lodge Creek drainage. At this Friday morning pull, a clean public live elevation/release table was thin in text form — treat pool as **confirm-before-you-go** on FWP State Park notices, and fish cool water and forage around the park. Schedules **can change without notice**. Soft level → bite notes only.

NODE	PULL SNAPSHOT	OPS SIGNAL	BITE CONTEXT
Cooney Reservoir FWP State Park	Live elev thin on text pull	Confirm FWP park notices before midday plan	Cool dawns = trout along dam face and points
Cooney State Park (home pin) Park launch / shore access	Primary access	Confirm park hours on-site	Dawn dam face and park banks
Red Lodge Creek influence Cooler inflow pockets	Clarity unconfirmed	Soft level notes only	Fish color changes and shade

Honest thin board: Live elevation and hourly release were thin on the public text pull. Confirm the latest agency notices before you go. Dam restricted zones are off-limits.

PARK FRI–SUN

Dawn dam face and points; quiet weekday mornings

PARK ETIQUETTE

Share shore with campers; idle no-wake

● HOW TO FISH IT

BANK

Cooney State Park shoreline and legal dam-face banks outside restricted markers are the trout bank plays. Dawn spoons, spinners, and small jigs along the face and points while the Beartooth-front air is still crisp, then slide to any deeper seam you can reach from shore once the sun climbs. Watch park rules, slick rock, and give room to campers and other bank anglers. A quiet weekday dawn still fishes cleaner than a busy afternoon.

KAYAK

Cooney's size suits a kayak perfectly for covering the dam face and shoreline transitions without pressure. Launch at the park, work first light along the face and points for rainbows, and stay clear of swimmers when the park wakes up. Wear a PFD, keep out of the trailer lane, and hop quiet banks boats overlook. Slow, clean presentations beat power-fishing this water in cool September air. Keep the first hour honest and mobile, and let bait marks decide whether you stay shallow or slide deeper.

BOAT

Short, quiet runs along the dam face and points at dawn from the State Park launch. Idle near swimmers and park banks, watch unmarked rock, and keep the plan compact. If trout slide deeper after mid-morning, change depth before you circle the whole reservoir empty. Share the park politely — Cooney is as much a family water as a fishing water midweek. If rainbows show as soft marks along the face, slow down and make a second quieter pass before you switch lures. Park crowds grow with the sun — the dawn hour is still the cleanest water of the day.

● LURE BOX**TOP**

Small spoon — silver or gold along dam face at dawn

Dry fly / terrestrial — if you see sippers on calm mornings

Bubble-and-fly — park shoreline pockets

MID

Rooster Tail / Panther Martin — black/yellow or rainbow along points

Small Rapala — silver/blue on shade lines

Soft hackle / nymph under indicator — cooler seams

BOTTOM

Marabou jig — black or olive along dam face

PowerBait / cured spawn — legal park banks where allowed

Small tube — scud colors on rock

● RAINBOW TROUT LIFE STAGE

Early October rainbows here feed best in cool dawn water along the dam face and points, then slide deeper as midday warms. Secondary brown trout and perch may show on the same edges.

● NATURAL FORAGE

Most-likely menu: **aquatic insects** in cooler water, **small baitfish**, and **scuds/crayfish** on rock. Hatch reports are thin. Match what you see trout sipping or marking. If you are not marking bait after two honest moves, change water — a new point or creek mouth — before you empty the box changing colors.

● ALSO HOT / ALSO IN SEASON

- **Brown trout** — deeper dam face with spoons — secondary
- **Yellow perch** — small jigs on brush
- **Northern pike** — weed edges if present — secondary

● HEAVY TRAFFIC

Soft recreational pressure for Fri–Sun. **No named national or regional trail event** was pulled for Cooney Reservoir on Oct 2–4 at this gather. Expect lighter weekday traffic at Cooney State Park than a sunny weekend, with a bump if midweek sun draws locals. Ramp etiquette still matters — idle near beaches and give bank anglers room. Local after-work traffic can bump Saturday or Sunday if the sun wins the afternoon, so an early trailer still buys the quietest water.

● ETHANOL-FREE FUEL · PURE-GAS.ORG E0 · THIS WATER

Closest Pure-Gas.org ethanol-free listings near Cooney Reservoir (stations only — verify grade at the pump; listings can change):

- **Y Stop** — Y Stop, 4 Cooney Rd, Roberts, MT (~5.8 mi) · Ethanol-free SINCLAIR 85 88 91; GPS entered by Roxie Melton
- **Rockin J** — Rockin J, 2993 Hwy 78, Absarokee, MT (~12.1 mi) · Ethanol-free CENEX 91; GPS entered by Jonathan Lathbury
- **Beartooth Corner Inc** — Beartooth Corner Inc, 54 S Woodard Ave, Absarokee, MT (~12.7 mi) · Ethanol-free CONOCO 91; GPS located from address
- **Farm Union Trading Co** — Farm Union Trading Co, 101 Pratten St, Columbus, MT (~13.5 mi) · Ethanol-free CENEX 91; GPS entered by Jonathan Lathbury

No pump prices in this **Cast**. Confirm ethanol-free grade at the pump if that matters for your motor.

If wind or showers rearrange the day, shorten the run and fish the first clean point or creek mouth you can reach safely from Cooney State Park — a tight dawn window still beats a long midday grind on stained water.

● DAY-BY-DAY FISHING NOTES

Friday favors the cleanest dawn window of the three if overnight showers stay light — be on the first point or creek mouth you trust within thirty minutes of sunrise, then decide whether to slide deeper or stay shallow based on bait marks, not the clock alone. If the afternoon breeze stands up, treat windward breaks as a feature: shorten casts, keep the bait in the strike zone, and move along the break instead of camping on one empty cast. Saturday and Sunday often share a pattern in early fall — cooler air helps the morning, then sun or showers compress the shallow bite after late morning. When radar shows cells, fish the edges and the thirty quiet minutes after a cell passes rather than forcing a long open-water run under a dark shelf. Keep a bank or kayak backup close to the ramp so a washed-out main-lake plan still puts a line in the water.

Presentation speed should follow water temperature and wind more than habit. Cooler dawn water usually wants a slower jig or harness; once chop dirties the surface or bait marks rise, speed up just enough to stay in contact. If you are marking bait with no followers, change depth before you change lure color. If you are marking nothing, move — early-fall fish on these reservoirs reward a mobile first hour more than a stubborn second hour on the same empty bank.

● ACCESS AND SAFETY

Trailer etiquette matters even on quiet weekdays: stage off the ramp lane, launch efficiently, and idle out of the no-wake pocket before you plane off. Bank anglers get first courtesy on shared riprap. Kayaks should stay visible and avoid the main takeoff lane when boats are loading. Lightning ends the argument — get off the water and wait. Submerged timber, unmarked rock, and changing ramp exposure with pool are the usual taxes on these waters; idle until you know the bottom. Dam restricted zones, boom lines, and posted closures stay off-limits no matter how good the seam looks from outside the markers.

Pack layers for cool dawns and a rain shell for midweek shower chances. Bring a headlamp for pre-dawn rigging, a spare trailer fuse, and enough fuel to cover a weather-shortened day without gambling on a long run home. If afternoon whitecaps stack on the main pool, reef early and finish the day in a protected arm or from the bank rather than proving a point in open water.

● LOOKING AHEAD

Cool mornings look locked in through early October on the local NWS grid, which usually helps shallow dawn windows and stretches the first-light bite a little later into the morning as nights keep falling. Watch how midweek shower trains rearrange water color — a stain line after a cell can concentrate bait on the first clean point outside a creek mouth for a short window. Keep confirming agency pool and ramp notices as September closes; a quiet change in pool can move the best break a cast or two deeper without any drama on social media. Next **Cast** cycle covers the Thursday–Sunday stretch, when another cool front or a quieter sky can rewrite which bank you start on.

If you only get one morning this window, take Friday's first light unless radar is ugly — then take the first clean dawn after the cells pass. A short, honest trip that puts bait and fish on the graph beats a long midday grind on empty banks. Carry two confidence presentations (one slow bottom, one mid-column) and let the marks choose which one earns the next hour.

● SOURCES

- NWS BYZ gridpoint forecast for Cooney Reservoir / Cooney State Park — pulled Fri Oct 2 morning CT
- Agency / park recreation notices for pool and ramp context (thin live elev/cfs on text pull)
- Pure-Gas.org ethanol-free station listings near this water
- Public access: Cooney State Park

Freshwater Cast · Montana · Cooney Reservoir · Fri Oct 2 – Sun Oct 4, 2026 · bank / kayak / boat
· times MT